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## Search for police boss

By Jordan Carleo-Evangelist Staff writer  
Published 01:00 a.m., Tuesday, December 1, 2009

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Kevin Tuffey (SKIP DICKSTEIN)



As the task force charged with finding the city's next police chief seeks the public's help this week, Deputy Chief [Steven Krokoff](#) said Monday he wants the job.

Krokoff, 39, has been widely discussed as a likely candidate since Chief [James Tuffey](#) abruptly retired in September amid allegations he used a racial slur. Tuffey's departure in the middle of a heated mayoral primary prompted Mayor [Jerry Jennings](#) to call for a national search for his replacement.

The news of Krokoff's interest comes at a time when the task force appointed by Jennings for the search is preparing to solicit public input at a meeting Thursday night. Both the eight-member task force and the meeting are unprecedented in Albany.

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Until now the chief has served at the pleasure of the mayor. But the next chief, the sixth appointed under Jennings, will be the first whose hiring is subject to the [Common Council's](#) consent, a fact that likely loomed large in Jennings' decision to appoint a broad-based panel to vet candidates early in the process.

Jennings has in the past been faulted by critics for too often tapping close friends to fill important posts, an accusation that followed him throughout Tuffey's tumultuous three-plus years as chief.

Thursday's meeting will be the task force's much-anticipated first public step.

"The committee wanted to ensure that the public had an opportunity to express its suggestions to us prior to our interviewing any candidates," said [Larry Rosen](#), the task force's chairman and a retired Albany County judge.

Rosen said the task force has not yet formally advertised the job because it wanted to include public input in the job description. The committee, he said, tentatively plans to accept resumes through the end of December, conduct interviews throughout January and, ideally, forward one or more names to the mayor in February.

The chief — who would be scheduled to make \$103,954 next year — oversees a nearly \$46 million budget.

A number of resumes have already come in unsolicited, Rosen said — though Krokoff, one of the department's two deputy chiefs, said his is not yet one of them.

Krokoff, who started as a patrol officer in West Hill in 1993 and is currently studying at night for his master's of business administration at the University at Albany, is the first candidate to publicly declare his interest.

Foremost on his list of priorities, Krokoff said, would be repairing ties between the department and the city's neighborhoods, where residents have voiced increasing concerns about safety despite statistical declines in violent crime.

Krokoff said recent moves toward data-driven policing have been "extremely effective in reducing crime" but acknowledged those gains ring hollow to people living in fear of being victimized.

"I believe that the missing piece is our link to the community," he said, "Are you going to tell the person on the street, 'I'm sorry, you're wrong to feel that you are not safe?'"

Alice Green, executive director of the Center for Law and Justice and a member of the task force, said it's vital that the public feel involved in the selection.

"To make this a really credible search, we have to have the input from the community," Green said, noting that it's equally important that officers on the 338-member force have a voice in the process.

Christian Mesley, president of the Albany Police Officers Union, which represents about 275 patrol officers and detectives, echoed that sentiment and noted that union members were surprised not to have been included in the task force.

The next chief will have to be adept at dealing with the union. Tuffey, a former APOU president, had a fractious relationship with its leadership. He was brought in because of his strong management style but was accused by the union of being a bully.

The new chief also will have to be a resident of the city, another new requirement stemming from a law passed by the Common Council earlier this year.

For Krokoff, who lives in Clifton Park, that would mean a move. But he said he and his wife have already begun looking at houses in the city.

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